

Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

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FM AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7656

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

AMEMBASSY MANILA

AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

AMEMBASSY TOKYO

C O N F I D E N T I A L KUALA LUMPUR 3928

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PDEV, VN, MY

SUBJECT: MALAYSIAN SRV RELATIONS

1. SUMMARY. AMB MILLER WAS WARMLY RECEIVED IN HIS INITIAL CALLS ON FOREIGN MINISTER RITHAUDDEEN AND MFA SECRETARY GENERAL ZAKARIA. RITHAUDDEEN DISCUSSED HIS RECENT VISIT TO HANOI AND POSSIBLE AID TO VIETNAM IN RUBBER DEVELOPMENT. HE ALSO APPEARED REASSURED BY AMB MILLER'S STATEMENT THAT THE U.S. DOES NOT INTEND TO AGREE TO UNILATERAL FORCES REDUCTIONS IN THE INDIAN OCEAN. END SUMMARY.

2. AMB MILLER MADE HIS INTRODUCTORY CALLS ON FOREIGN MINISTER TENGKU RITHAUDDEEN JUNE 23 AND MFA SECRETARY GENERAL DATUK ZAKARIA JUNE 23. ALTHOUGH BOTH WERE COURTESY CALLS, THE FOREIGN MINISTER, AND TO A LESSER EXTENT ZAKARIA, DISCUSSED SUBSTANTIVE MATTERS WHICH MAY BE OF INTEREST SINCE THEY RELATE TO MALAYSIAN RELATIONS WITH THE U.S., REACTION TO U.S. SOVIET TALKS ON INDIAN OCEAN FORCE REDUCTIONS, AND TO MALAYSIA'S ATTEMPTS TO BUILD BRIDGES BETWEEN ASEAN AND
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VIETNAM.

3. AMB MILLER OPENED THE CONVERSATION WITH TENGKU 'DIN (AS HE IS KNOWN IN THE MINISTRY) BY CONVEYING SECRETARY VANCE'S PERSONAL GREETINGS AND NOTHING THAT THE SECRETARY LOOKS FORWARD TO MEETING THE MINISTER WHEN HE COMES TO WASHINGTON LATER THIS YEAR. TENGKU 'DIN EXPRESSED PLEASURE

AT THIS MESSAGE AND AT THE FACT THAT ARRANGEMENTS ARE UNDER WAY FOR PRIME MINISTER HUSSEIN ONN TO CALL ON PRESIDENT CARTER, THUS GIVING THE MINISTER AN OPPORTUNITY TO MEET THE SECRETARY. IN THIS REGARD HE WELCOMED THE VISIT OF AGRICULTURE SECRETARY BERGLAND AS THE FIRST CABINET-LEVEL VISIT FROM THE CARTER ADMINISTRATION AND STRONGLY ENDORSED A LARGER NUMBER OF HIGHER LEVEL EXCHANGES BETWEEN THE GOM AND THE U.S. THAN HAS TAKEN PLACE IN THE PAST. (UNDER SECRETARY RAZALI TOLD ACTING DCM LAST WEEK THAT HE PERSONALLY WOULD WELCOME A VISIT FROM SOMEONE LIKE ASST SECRETARY HOLBROOKE WHO COULD APPROPRIATELY CALL ON THE PRIME MINISTER TO DISCUSS AMERICAN VIEWS ON SECURITY AND POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS AS UNDER SECRETARY HABIB HAD DONE IN THE PAST.)

4. IN RESPONSE TO A QUESTION, THE FOREIGN MINISTER SAID THAT IN HANOI IN LATE MAY HE HAD DISCUSSED ASSISTANCE TO THE SRV IN THE FIELDS OF RUBBER AND PALM OIL PRODUCTION. WITH REGARD TO THE FORMER, TENGKU 'DIN SAID THAT VIETNAM HAD ONLY ABOUT 150,000 ACRES OF MATURE TREES AND THAT ONLY ABOUT ONE-THIRD OF THIS AREA WAS REALLY PRODUCTIVE. EVEN THIS THIRD IS MADE UP OF OLDER TYPES OF TREES THAT YIELD ONLY ABOUT 400 POUNDS OF RUBBER PER ACRE PER YEAR AS COMPARED WITH MALAYSIAN YIELDS OF 600 TO 1,000 POUNDS PER ACRE YEAR. HE WAS NOT SURE WHAT FORM ASSISTANCE WOULD TAKE, BUT THE GOM WILL PROBABLY BE SENDING A "TECHNOLOGICAL TEAM" TO EVALUATE HOW MODERN MALAYSIAN RUBBER TECHNOLOGY CAN BENEFIT

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THE SRV. THE MINISTER NOTED THAT THIS WOULD TAKE TIME AS THERE ARE POLITICAL PROBLEMS INVOLVING INTEGRATION OF SOUTH AND NORTH VIETNAM, PROBLEMS WHICH ARE ALSO AFFECTING RICE PRODUCTION. DESPITE EXPECTED DELAYS, HE SAID THE GOM IS PLEASED THAT VIETNAM IS "COMING OUT OF ITS SHELL." ONE SIGN OF THE SRV'S WILLINGNESS TO TALK AND POSSIBLY TO COOPERATE, HE ADDED, WAS THAT THEY HAD NO OBJECTION TO HIM SAYING IN HIS HANOI PRESS CONFERENCE THAT HE THINKS THAT THEY WILL BE PREPARED TO DISCUSS NEUTRALIZATION OF THE AREA SOME TIME IN THE FUTURE. THIS IS SIGNIFICANT, RITHAUDDEEN NOTED, BECAUSE THEY HAD OPPOSED NEUTRALIZATION OF THE AREA SINCE THE DEGAULLE PLAN AND WOULD HAVE TO EDUCATE THEIR PEOPLE TO ACCEPT THE POSSIBILITY. TENGKU 'DIN WAS ALSO HEARTENED BY WHAT SEEMED TO BE ASSURANCES THAT THE SRV WILL NOT EXPORT ARMS TO DISSIDENTS IN THE REGION. (IN THE ZAKARIA MEETING, THE SECGEN CONFIRMED THAT THE VIETNAMESE HAD RAISED AID TO "COMMUNICATIONS", AS REPORTED IN THE FAR EASTERN ECONOMIC REVIEW, BUT HE PROFESSED TO BE STARTLED BY THEIR INTRODUCTION OF THIS TOPIC AND CLAIMED THEY HAD NOT EXPANDED ON IT.)

5. RITHAUDDEEN CONTRASTED THE WILLINGNESS OF THE SRV TO

TALK WITH THE CAMBODIAN REFUSAL TO COME OUT OF ITS SHELL. HE SAID THAT THE MALAYSIAN DELEGATION HAD MET WITH THE CAMBODIAN CHARGE WHILE THEY WERE IN HANOI. THE LATTER ADMITTED FRANKLY THAT THEY DO NOT WISH TO HAVE ADDITIONAL DIPLOMATIC MISSIONS IN PHNOM PENH BECAUSE IT COULD NOT ACCOMMODATE THEM PROPERLY.

6. TENGKU 'DIN, RATHER REMARKABLY, IN THE EMBASSY'S EXPERIENCE, SOUGHT TO REASSURE THE AMBASSADOR ABOUT THE STATE OF HEALTH OF THE NATIONAL FRONT, WHICH IS CURRENTLY SOMEWHAT TROUBLED. HE POINTED OUT THAT THE COUNTRY IS MAKING GOOD PROGRESS ECONOMICALLY AND THAT IT SHOULD REMAIN STABLE POLITICALLY FOR THE FORESEEABLE FUTURE UNLESS SOME UNFORESEEN EVENT (BY WHICH HE PROBABLY MEANT THE DEATH OF THE
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PM) OCCURS. HE ALSO WENT OUT OF HIS WAY TO NOTE THAT MALAYASIA HAD SOUGHT TO ACCOMMODATE ITS FRIENDS AMONG THE MARITIME NATIONS BY SHIFTING ITS POLICY ON THE MALACCA STRAITS TO PROVIDE FOR TRANSIT PASSAGE. WITH REGARD TO THE U.S.-SOVIET TALKS ON PREVENTING AN ARMS RACE IN THE INDIAN OCEAN, HE APPEARED REASSURED BY THE AMBASSADOR'S STATEMENT THAT WE WILL NOT ENGAGE IN A UNILATERAL REDUCTION OF OUR FORCES. (SEE SEPTTEL FOR REACTION OF UNDER SECRETARY RAZALI.)

7. COMMENT: THE INCREASED DEGREE OF CORDIALITY EVIDENCED BY TENGKU 'DIN'S LONG CONVERSATION WITH THE AMBASSADOR AND HIS WILLINGNESS TO DISCUSS MATTERS HERETOFORE CONSIDERED SENSITIVE WOULD SEEM TO SIGNIFY THE FRUITION OF THE CHANGE IN ATTITUDE TOWARD THE U.S. THAT HAS MARKED THE REGIME OF DATUK HUSSEIN. ANOTHER RELIABLE SOURCE CONFIRMS THAT THE MALAYSIANS WERE PLEASED BY THE RECEPTION RITHAUDDEEN RECEIVED IN HANOI AND AT THE FACT SRV REPS EXPRESSED THEIR APPRECIATION TO THE GOM FOR (A) NOT TAKING AN ACTIVE PART IN THE VIETNAM WAR, AND (B) BEING THE FIRST ASEAN COUNTRY TO SEEK A FRIENDLY RELATIONSHIP. IT IS CLEAR FROM THESE CONVERSATIONS, HOWEVER, THAT, AS RITHAUDDEEN ALSO TOLD DEPUTY ASST SECRETARY OAKLEY, THE MALAYSIANS ARE STILL NOT COMPLETELY REASSURED THAT HANOI IS WON OVER TO BE CONSTRUCTIVE, COOPERATIVE ROLE.
MILLER

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